

Town of Groton

173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450
Tel: 978-732-1893
Fax: 978-448-1115

fstanley@townofgroton.org



Park Commissioners

Gineane Haberlin, Chair
Kenneth Bushnell
Robert Flynn
Matthew Frary
Jonathan Strauss

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 17, 2014
Time: 7 p.m.
Location: Town Hall, Second Floor Lunch Room, 173 Main Street, Groton
Commission attendees: Gineane Haberlin, Jonathan Strauss, Matthew Frary, Robert Flynn, Kenneth Bushnell
Other attendees: Dawn Priest, Beth Carney (Dunstable resident), Britta Roper
Handouts: Agenda
September 29, 2014 draft minutes

Gineane Haberlin called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

Invoices

Pending invoices were reviewed and Commissioners approved payment for various invoices including an emergency electric department call out charge to supply power for the PTA Halloween event at Town Field. Commissioners asked Fran Stanley to arrange removal of many of the ball field portable restrooms now that football and soccer have concluded their fall seasons.

Cutler Field Playground

Dawn Priest attended the meeting and spoke to the Commission regarding an independent fundraising campaign that she has run to fund installation of an accessible swing at the Cutler Field Playground. Dawn Priest has raised about \$550 for a swing that typically costs \$399, but with shipping would total about \$639. Dawn Priest shopped for different accessible swing types and narrowed her search to a swing that would fit a range of child sizes as it is rated to hold up to 125 pounds.

Gineane Haberlin provided an overview of Park Commission priorities. The Commissioners are in agreement that they would like to provide clean, safe and accessible playgrounds. For the past year, the Commissioners have focused on the first two goals of clean and safe. Going forward, the Park Commissioners plan to have the Cutler Field playground inspected and also plan to move and install some play structures from the abandoned Prescott School playground. The Prescott School playground has modern play structures that were installed just a couple of years before the School District decided to close the elementary school.

Commissioners asked whether the new accessible swing could be installed on the current swing sets. Perhaps a "T" swing set with two bays could be installed. Establishing a gift fund for Cutler Field Playground Accessibility was discussed with the caveat that once money is donated to the gift fund, then the Park Commissioners would have control over the expenditure of those funds. Gineane Haberlin and Kenneth Bushnell will examine the Prescott School play structures and estimate what components might be moved to Cutler Field. Commissioners thanked Dawn Priest for her interest in improving Cutler Field's playground. Matthew Frary commented that the teeter totters need to be removed as he frequently hears that children riding one end or the other of the teeter totter seat experience sharp drops and end up crying when they thump back down to the ground.

Commissioners agreed to defer installation of anything new until they learn from the professional playground inspection how an accessible swing can be used safely. For example, the existing swing set may need improved anchoring, the playground surface may need improvements and the addition of the accessible swing may need additional side clearance.

Also, the town's Commission on Accessibility is preparing a CPC application to fund Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan for accessibility at Groton's parks, playgrounds & open space. The study or evaluation would be performed by the Center for Independent Living (<http://www.centerlw.org/services/ada-consulting/>).

Field Use Permits

Dunstable resident Beth Carney and Groton resident Britta Roper addressed the Park Commissioners regarding their pending field use permit requesting use of Cow Pond soccer fields for one week in August, 2015. The British Soccer Camp (Challenger soccer, formerly MLS Soccer) is a for profit enterprise that provides instructors and liability insurance (can be issued in January, 2015). Groton's youth soccer program uses a surcharge over the basic costs of this program to make this camp serve as a fundraiser for Groton's youth soccer group. The camp is scheduled for the last week before school starts. Organizers would like to advertise the camps ahead of the Christmas/Hanukah holiday season in the event that grandparents want to gift the camp to their grandchildren. Typically, 40 children attend the camp. With advance notice, more children may enroll in the program. Organizers want a Cow Pond location because the camp is required to have a lightning shelter and separate portable restrooms for each gender. These are elements that the large Cow Pond facility possesses whereas the Park Commission's other smaller ball fields lack a lightning shelter and sometimes multiple portable restrooms to allow for gender separated toilets.

Jonathan Strauss moved to accept the proposed Challenger Soccer field use permit for Cow Pond soccer fields from August 17, 2015 to August 21, 2015 pending submission of a certificate of insurance. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Ice Rinks

Commissioners discussed ice rinks and will install Evan's Rink at Legion Common with accessible porta pottie nearby. Some new brackets may need to be ordered. Kenneth Bushnell arranged for all new boards and a new liner to be ordered from Moore's Lumber in Ayer. Kenneth Bushnell stated that a 36' by 80' rink fits in the space available on Legion Common.

Commissioners agreed into purchase and install a second rink in West Groton to be located at Tarbell if the Town agrees. Accessible porta pottie will be placed there as well.

Winterization of Irrigation Systems

Dawson Landscaping and Turf Unlimited have both completed winterization of their contracted Park Commission ball fields.

Looking ahead to a revised RFP in January for field maintenance (irrigation and fertilization) for calendar year 2015, Commissioners agreed to the following additions:

- rain sensors for irrigation systems;
- soil testing with lime application; and
- aeration.

The Town Field soccer area looked a bit rough after end of season for the Lawrence Academy boys' soccer. Robert Flynn will contact Athletics Director Kevin Potter to see what steps have been taken or need to be taken to ready the field for the spring.

Now that Cow Pond is closed and once the porta potties have been removed, then DPW can be asked to close off the access road to the rear of the property by placing large boulders in the top of the roadway. Commissioners suggested that the road and parking area behind Cow Pond could use regarding and additional gravel.

Smith Social Pavilion

Robert Flynn investigated tech school help with a re-build. The tech school is willing but does charge a fee in the amount of ¼ of the materials cost which helps fund their program. Commissioners noted that the first attempt will be

to rebuild the gazebo with 100% donated labor and materials with no extra payments to any group. Until the Park Commission funding link and outreach is made to area builders and construction related businesses, it is unclear whether this goal will be feasible. If the gazebo cannot be funded privately, then the Park Commission can pursue Town funding.

Minutes

Commissioners reviewed the most recent set of draft minutes.

Kenneth Bushnell moved to approve the September 29, 2014 minutes as drafted. Matthew Frary seconded and motion carried 5:0.

CPC Update

Park Commissioner liaison Matthew Frary provided an overview of the proposed CPC projects. The initial two-page summaries were submitted by applicants and reviewed by the CPC. There are a number of applicants looking to fund projects out of the unrestricted funds account for the CPC.

Matthew Frary described the Town Field and Cutler Field basketball court project that he previewed for the CPC. Historic District Commissions input in to the Town Field court has raised costs on that project. Current projection is a \$60,000 cost which will include placing wiring underground, particular light fixtures/poles and a painted court surface. Accessibility to the basketball court would also be improved. DPW would perform drainage work in concert with this project if funding for the Town Field basketball court is found. The expected DPW drainage work would help to preserve the new investment in the basketball court by redirecting excess run-off and planning for better absorption of the storm water run-off that remains. The Cutler Field basketball court would cost approximately \$40,000. Some of the Cow Pond soccer field metal halide lights may be re-used at the Cutler basketball court, but the project costs are expected to be lower.

The CPC feedback wondered whether the Park Commission may want to select one court to replace in this funding round. Commissioners agreed that both courts need attention and have for a number of years. Also, the separate Groton and West Groton locations mean that the courts tend to serve separate resident groups. Commissioners discussed possibility of seeking a separate warrant article for funding if the CPC is not prepared to support the project.

Jonathan Strauss provided a school liaison report. Jonathan Strauss stressed the need for any turf field CPC proposal to make sure that the School Committee is fully in support of any plan so that the proposal does not unravel as the project meets questions or criticism. The School District would need to be persuasive that they could adequately maintain a new turf field. If the School District offers a two year maintenance plan for its existing ball fields, then this might be a good show that the School District would preserve an asset that the Towns help to improve. Also, any CPC request for Groton help at the School District would need to be paired with a request for the Dunstable CPC to fund one-third of it.

2016 Budget and Capital Improvements

Gineane Haberlin reported on 2016 budget. With extra items to be added to the Requests for Proposals for ball field care and extra portable restroom costs, an estimated 25% increase would be helpful. Past requests for capital improvements may help fund professional lighting at Cow Pond – less expensive now that soccer use group upgraded some of the electrical – and playground improvements at the Christine Hanson playground and Cutler Field. Ideally, each Park Commission ball field would have a few accompanying play structures to offer recreational opportunities to younger siblings of youth sports league participants. The walking track around Cow Pond is a project that could be done cooperatively with DPW and may be funded through a future capital improvements request.

Other future projects include directional signs project and expansion/improvement of the Woitowicz parking lot by removing the existing tennis court facility. Commissioners questioned whether improved parking and improved traffic flow could provide enough space satisfy all of the lacrosse use group needs.

Donation of Buddy Bench to Christine Hanson Playground

Commissioners reviewed the 6 page proposal from grandparents Cheryl and Ralph Finney to donate a buddy bench dedicated to their 11 year old granddaughter Hailey Sullivan. Their granddaughter is a Groton resident with learning disabilities and a buddy bench installed at her favorite playground (Christine Hanson Memorial Playground) would help her and other children engage socially with others. The proposal describes the concept of a buddy bench and suggests a durable style and type of bench that may work well for the project. Commissioners approved of the concept of the plan. Gineane Haberlin and Kenneth Bushnell will tour the playground in the next couple of weeks. Kenneth Bushnell will suggest a suitable location for the bench.

Kenneth Bushnell further noted that the manufacturer will ask whether bench will be 'flush mounted'. Flush mounting is for structures being attached directly to concrete slabs. There is no slab at the playground so a 'non flush mounted' type should be requested. The sturdy bench will be delivered with long metal legs that will be secured with concrete footings.

Meeting Schedule

Commissioners agreed to reserve meeting times on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 pm and preferably at the Legion Hall location. This meeting schedule will alternate with CPC which follows a second and fourth Monday meeting schedule. The Park Commission plan to meet at least once per month, but are allowing for a twice a month schedule during busy months.

Next Meeting: December 15, 2014 at 7 pm in Legion Hall.

Jonathan Strauss moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 pm. Matthew Fray seconded and motion carried 5:0.

Notes by Fran Stanley.